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R 300530Z MAY 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUHHHQA/CINCPAC
RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
STATE GRNC
BT
S E C R E T SAIGON 27074

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izzo DATE 10/5/82
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REVIEWED 1—2
ENDORSE EXCEPTIONS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

Saigon 27074 5/30/67

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EXDIS

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH PM KY ON MONDAY, I EMPHASIZED THE GREAT IMPORTANCE WE ATTACHED TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE

CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS AND THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS THROUGH WHICH WE HOPED AND EXPECTED THE FREE WILL OF THE PEOPLE WOULD BE EXPRESSED. I SAID THAT AS I HAD MENTIONED TO HIM BEFORE WE BELIEVED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FREELY ELECTED, STABLE CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE THE BEST KIND OF DEMONSTRATION TO THE VIET CONG AND NVN THAT SOUTH VIET NAM WAS HERE TO STAY AND WOULD REPRESENT AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR IN THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE. I ADDED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE ELECTIONS BE CARRIED OUT FAIRLY AND HONESTLY NOT ONLY FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF DOMESTIC REACTION HERE BUT ALSO THAT OF WORLD OPINION AS WELL. IT WAS THEREFORE IMPORTANT THAT ACTS OF REPRESSION AND INDISCRIMINATE USE OF PRESS CENSORSHIP SHOULD BE AVOIDED. A FURTHER ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL FACTOR WAS THE MAINTENANCE OF THE INTEGRITY AND UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES. I REMINDED THE PM OF THE ASSURANCES BOTH HE AND THIEU HAD GIVEN TO THE PRESIDENT AT GUAM, ASSURANCES WHICH HAD BEEN REPEATED TO ME ALSO ON EVERY OCCASION IN WHICH I HAD SEEN EITHER OF THEM.

2. I SAID THAT I HAD, OF COURSE, SEEN THE REPORTS OF GENERAL THIEU'S POSSIBLE CANDIDACY AND HAD HAD A VERY FRANK TALK WITH GENERAL THIEU LAST FRIDAY ON THE QUESTION OF ARMED FORCES UNITY SHOULD THERE BE TWO MILITARY CANDIDATES. WHILE I CAME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION GENERAL THIEU HAD NOT YET DEFINTELY MADE A DECISION TO RUN HE HAD ASSURED ME THAT SHOULD HE DECIDE TO DO SO, HE FELT THAT UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED AND THAT GENERAL VIEN WOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY THROUGH WITH HIS

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DETERMINATION TO KEEP THE MILITARY ALOOF FROM POLITICS. I ALSO SAID THAT I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT GENERAL THIEU FELT SOMEWHAT ISOLATED AND THAT HIS FEELINGS HAD BEEN HURT BY WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE SOMETHING LESS THAN CONSIDERATE TREATMENT BY SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES.

3. KY REPLIED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THIS, BUT THE FACT WAS THAT GENERAL THIEU HAD BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE UP HIS MIND AND BECAUSE OF THIS INABILITY, KY'S COLLEAGUES HAD INSISTED THAT HE COME FORWARD AS A CANDIDATE. HE HAD INFORMED GENERAL THIEU THAT HE PROPOSED TO RUN, AND THIEU HAD INTERPOSED NO OBJECTIONS, HE FELT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS SOME DANGER THAT WITH TWO MILITARY CANDIDATES IN THE FIELD, THE UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES MIGHT BE AFFECTED AND THAT THIS, OF COURSE, MUST BE AVOIDED. HE REALIZED THAT THIEU DID FEEL SOMEWHAT ISOLATED AND THAT HIS FEELINGS HAD BEEN HURT AND HE, THEREFORE, PROPOSED TO TALK WITH THIEU THIS WEEK TO TRY TO FIND OUT WHAT HE REALLY WANTED AND SEE WHETHER HE COULD NOT COME TO SOME SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT WITH HIM. I ENCOURAGED KY TO DO THIS AND SAID THAT I FELT IT WOULD BE A MOST CONSTRUCTIVE STEP.

4. I REFERRED AGAIN TO THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEING THAT THE ELECTIONS PROCESS WAS CARRIED OUT FAIRLY FOR ALL CANDIDATES AND THE NEED TO AVOID PRESSURE TACTICS, THE DISCRIMINATORY USE OF CENSORSHIP AND THE MAKING OF ILL CONSIDERED STATEMENTS WHICH COULD BE EASILY MISCONSTRUED SUCH AS THE ONE HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE MADE THAT HE WOULD USE WHATEVER MEANS HE THOUGHT NECESSARY TO OPPOSE A CIVILIAN CANDIDATE WHOSE POLICIES HE DID NOT AGREE WITH. STATEMENTS SUCH AS THESE COULD GIVE RISE TO CRITICISM IN THE US AS WELL AS IN OTHER COUNTRIES. HE AGREED THAT THIS WAS SO AND SAID THAT HE PROPOSED TO SEE THAT ELECTIONS WERE CONDUCTED FAIRLY. WITH REFERENCE TO THE STATEMENT HE WAS QUOTED AS HAVING MADE, HE SAID SOME CORRESPONDENT ASKED HIM A SILLY QUESTION SUCH AS, WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A COMMUNIST WAS ELECTED? HE SAID THIS WAS IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS SOMEONE ASKING, WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF MR KOSYGIN WERE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.?

5. HE REFERRED TO FURTHER MATTERS IN CONNECTION WITH ELECTIONS. THE FIRST WAS IN REGARD TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DIRECTORATE TO THE ASSEMBLY FOR CHANGES IN ARTICLE 10 AND IN REVERTING TO THE DATES ORIGINALLY PROPOSED FOR THE ELECTIONS. HE SAID THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE DIRECTORATE HAD WANTED TO TAKE A HARD LINE WITH THE ASSEMBLY. HE PERSUADED THEM THAT THIS WOULD BE VERY UNWISE AS IT MIGHT RESULT IN THE RESIGNATION OF THE ASSEMBLY AND THEY WOULD BE BACK WHERE THEY STARTED FROM. AS AN ALTERNATIVE, HE GOT TOGETHER AT LUNCH ON MONDAY WITH ABOUT 20 MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY AND TALKED TO THEM ABOUT THE SUGGESTIONS OF THE DIRECORTATE AND SECURED THEIR AGREEMENT TO ACCEPT THEM.

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6. HIS SECOND POINT WAS AN ACCOUNT OF THE LONG TALK HE HAD WITH HUONG AT VUNG TAU ON MAY 18, IN WHICH HE SAID THEY CAME TO A COMPLET UNDERSTANDING. ACCORDING TO KY, HUONG SAID THAT HE EXPECTED KY TO WIN, BUT THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT HE HIMSELF SHOULD RUN AS A CIVILIAN CANDIDATE. HE WOULD, HOWEVER, AGREE TO COOPERATE WITH KY IN THE GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ELECTIONS. THE NET RESULT OF THEIR TALK WAS THAT WHOEVER WAS THE WINNER WOULD EMPLOY THE SERVICES OF THE LOSER. KY WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF ELECTED HE PRPOSED TO ASK THE COOPERATION NOT ONLY OF HUONG, BUT OF OTHER CANDIDATES AND THUS HE WOULD BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A STABLE REGIME REPRESENTING A BROAD SPECTURM OF THE VOTERS. THIS WAS THE ESSENTIAL THING, WHAT THE COUNTRY NEEDED AND WANTED WAS A STRONG REGIME RATHER THAN A STRONG MAN. HE DISCLAIMED ANY DESIRE TO SET UP ANYTHING RESEMBLING A DICTATORSHIP.

7. AS WE HAD HEARD REPORTS THAT GENERAL THANG WAS AGAIN CONSIDERING GIVING UP DIRECTION OF THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM IN ORDER TO RUN KY'S CAMPAIGN, I ASKED HIM ABOUT THANG'S PRESENT STATUS. KY SAID THAT THANG HAD AGAIN EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT AS TO HIS ABILITY TO WORK WITH OUR NEW ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP AND AGAIN HAD SUGGESTED THAT HE APPOINT GENERAL VIEN TO HEAD UP THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM. I SAID THAT THIS REALLY DIDN'T MAKE SENSE TO ME, IT WOULD BE LIKE MAKING SECRETARY MCNAMARA RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR PART OF THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM. KY AGREED, SAID THAT GENERAL VIEN HAD TOO MUCH ON HIS HANDS ALREADY AND HAD TOLD THANG THAT HE MUST CONTINUE WITH PACIFICATION PROGRAM. IF THANG SHOULD ATTEMPT TO RUN HIS CAMPAIGN, KY WOULD BE ACCUSED OF PUTTING HIS OWN PERSOANL FORTUNES AHEAD OF THE COUNTRYS INTEREST. I TOLD KY THAT HE SHOULD REASSURE GENERAL THANG THAT I WAS CERTAIN HE WOULD FIND THE NEW ORGANIZATION MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE AND EASIER TO WORK WITH. HE ASSURED ME THAT THANG WOULD STAY WITH THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM.

8. AS I LEFT KY SAID, "DON'T WORRY, I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THE SITUATION. IT IS LIKE A WESTERN MOVIE, IT WILL COME OUT ALL RIGHT IN THE END".

9. COMMENT: KY TALKED IN A SERIOUS VEIN, BUT AS IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH MCPHERSON AND JORDEN, EXHIBITED CONFIDENCE NOT ONLY TO HIS ABILITY TO WIN THE ELECTION BUT ALSO TO HANDLE THE DIFFICULT PRE-ELECTION PROBLEMS. I HOPE HE IS RIGHT AND THAT THE HAPPY ENDING OF THE WESTERN MOVIE WHICH HE ENVISAGES WILL NOT BE PRECEEDED BY THE GUN PLAY WHICH IS A NORMAL PART OF EVERY WESTERN. BUNKER